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SUBJECT: TURKEY: CIVIL UNREST CONTINUES IN SOUTHEAST

REF: A. A) ADANA 60 AND ADANA 64

[1](#)B. B) ADANA 66

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[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: A tense mood continued to prevail in Diyarbakir on March 31, the fourth day of violent civil unrest sparked by anger over the recent deaths of PKK guerrillas. With the March 31 police shooting death of yet another victim, a young child in Batman, the death toll across the southeast stands at seven. Many worried that today's (March 31) funeral of a young child killed in yesterday's (March 30) clashes between protestors and police would result in more violence in Diyarbakir. However, other than a few minor confrontations between police and small groups of demonstrators throughout the day, the city remains calm but very tense. Clashes between police and protestors, in solidarity with Diyarbakir protestors, continue to occur throughout southeast Turkey. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The mood in Diyarbakir on March 31 remains tense, with a few minor clashes between police and small groups of demonstrators, and funeral ceremonies for a young child killed in yesterday's (March 30) violence. A contact in Diyarbakir told us that DTP (Democratic Society Party) co-chairman Ahmet Turk addressed a crowd of tens of thousands of protestors and mourners in Diyarbakir on March 30 after the funeral for three people killed in rioting on March 29 (reftel A). Our contact said that Turk tried to calm and disperse the crowd, but to no avail. The unruly crowd continued toward the city when police intervened with tear gas and gunfire. A seven-year old child was shot and killed in the clash. The child's funeral today proceeded with no reported incidents. Another contact in Diyarbakir told us that there were currently no regular Army troops or equipment in the city, but such military forces could be deployed from their positions just outside the city upon request from the Provincial Governor.

Mayor Baydemir's Woes

[1](#)3. (SBU) Our contacts substantiated media reports that GOT prosecutors are considering bringing charges against Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir (DTP) for his March 30 statements to rioters, which called on both sides to stop the violence, but challenged the government to stop its "oppressive" approach to

the protests, and for having a "no-solution policy" for the Kurdish issue. In his remarks, Baydemir added that he shared the grief of the people. (Note: Post's translation of Baydemir's written statement reftel B). End note.) The press reported that prosecutors are considering charging Baydemir with, among other charges, "extending support to protest activities" and "making propaganda in a way that incited violence." Media reported that the investigation is focusing on oral statements Baydemir made in Kurdish "congratulating" people for their resistance before telling them to desist.

14. (SBU) One contact told us that Baydemir's remarks served to applaud the courage of the protestors, but the contact opined that the mayor did so with the intent to calm and disperse the angry group. Our contact added that Baydemir greeted a masked protestor with kisses before delivering his remarks at one location. He emphasized that Baydemir had consulted with representatives of various NGOs in town before giving the remarks, clearly indicating that it was his intent to prevent further incidents. The attorney said that, after a nod from Diyarbakir Governor Efkan Ala, the mayor, accompanied by NGO leaders, addressed the crowds in various parts of town. Another contact, a prominent human rights attorney and confidant of the mayor, told us that he had seen the written text of the mayor's statements to the crowds and warned the mayor that the statements might cause him trouble.

15. (SBU) A journalist contact in Diyarbakir told us that Baydemir declared to a televised gathering of protestors on March 31 that "the state should listen to and understand what the people want instead of pressing charges against me." He added, "I am ready to be a sacrifice for the people, if that is what the state wants." Baydemir said that shopkeepers should open their shops to normalize daily life in Diyarbakir. Our journalist contact told us that some shops opened after the mayor's remarks, but many remained closed. Our contact commented that in recent years the PKK had lost strength in Diyarbakir, but that people had become polarized over the demonstrations, and the PKK had regained strength by taking control of the city for three days. He said the security forces only controlled the Security Directorate and the Governor's

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office. He said that the PKK had hoisted a flag at a major intersection leading to the airport, along with a sign that read "PKK Check Point." He said that demonstrators attempted to take control of the old Police College building, where some demonstrators had allegedly been detained, and aimed to take control of the Governor's office. He said that about 500 police SWAT-style members had been dispatched from Istanbul and deployed throughout the city. He added that Interior Minister Abdulkadir Aksu, accompanied by eight ruling Justice and Development (AK) party parliamentarians from Diyarbakir, also visited the city, had given a stern, defiant, law-and-order speech, and refused to take questions from the press.

Demonstrations Spread Throughout Southeast

16. (SBU) Meanwhile, the press reported that demonstrations broke out on March 30 in Van, Sirnak, Siirt, Cizre, Kiziltepe, Nusaybin and Hakkari. (Note: Post previously reported clashes in Batman and Sanliurfa-see reftels. End note.) Our contact in Batman told us that the city was calm early on March 31, but the afternoon media reported that renewed clashes flared up between a small group of protestors and police in the afternoon. The media reported that one person, a young child, was shot and killed in Batman, bringing the southeast Turkey death toll to seven. The city's DTP Mayor, Huseyin Kalkan, had addressed protestors March 30 from a police armored vehicle and successfully calmed and dispersed the crowd. Our contact told us that during the March 30 demonstrations in Batman, 12 people had been wounded and 10 had been detained. Media reports said that the "Youth Initiative" group (NFI) in Batman issued a call to increase civil unrest across Turkey.

17. (SBU) The media reported new incidents on March 31 in Van, Hakkari, Adana and Mersin.

According to the media, small crowds in Van threw Molotov cocktails and burned cars and local government buildings.

Tensions are high in Yuksekova township of Hakkari province, very near both the Iranian and Iraqi border, after crowds clashed with police in the city center. Businesses closed and crowds erected roadblocks, burned tires in the street and threw stones at police. Police intervened with truncheons, water cannon, tear gas and firearms. Media reported that two people were wounded, one by gunshot, and seven people were taken into custody.

The press reported in Adana that a group of NGOs issued a press statement condemning the killing of the 14 PKK members in Mus. Later, a group of Cukurova University students handed out pamphlets, written in Turkish and Kurdish, condemning the Mus killings. The pamphlets contained anti-government slogans and threats to avenge the deaths in Diyarbakir.

Some businesses in Mersin are closed and a large crowd made an unannounced "peace march" in solidarity with Diyarbakir protests, according to press. We have seen no reports of clashes with security forces in Mersin.

Comment

18. (SBU) Diyarbakir and Batman remain volatile, and sympathy protests are cropping up elsewhere in southeast Turkey with little notice. Authorities in Diyarbakir are showing restraint for now, but as more forces arrive from elsewhere and long duty hours take their toll on authorities' patience, the potential for official use of violence with less restraint remains. The GOT's visible dispatch of the Interior Minister, buttressed by MPs, to Diyarbakir on March 31 to issue tough, uncompromising rhetoric has contributed to pronounced alienation from the GOT in the general populace. This attitude, perceived as hardline in the southeast, strengthens the appeal of the PKK to many everyday Kurds in southeast Turkey.

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